6. (Amended) The method according to Claim 23, wherein [the gene encoding] said [endogenous] wild-type extracellular protease gene has been deleted by homologous or illegitimate recombination.

7. (Amended) The method according to Claim 23, wherein at least one copy of [a plasmid comprises] said expression cassette is contained in a plasmid.

9. (Amended) The method according to Claim [7] 23, wherein said [mutant] mutated high alkaline protease gene is [obtained] derived from a *Bacillus* novo species PB92 high alkaline protease gene.

10. (Amended) The method according to Claim 7 or 23, wherein at least one copy of said expression cassette is integrated into the genome of said alkalophilic *Bacillus* strain host.

Cancel Claim 11.

12. (Amended) A method of obtaining [an] a non-reverting alkalophilic *Bacillus* strain having no detectable wild-type extracellular high alkaline protease, said method comprising:

transforming an alkalophilic *Bacillus* strain containing a wild-type high alkaline protease gene endogenous to said alkalophilic *Bacillus* strain with a cloning vector comprising [the] 5' and the 3' flanking regions but not [the] a coding region of a [gene coding for the] high alkaline protease gene and DNA encoding a replication function, wherein a sufficient amount of said flanking regions is present to provide for homologous recombination with [an endogenous gene coding for the] said wild-type high alkaline protease gene whereby transformants having an inactivated wild-type high alkaline protease gene are obtained;

identifying said transformants by growing said transformants under growth conditions to which [the] said replication function [of said cloning vector] is sensitive, whereby [the] said replication function [encoded by said vector] is inactivated; and

isolating [said] transformants so identified [as having said inactivated replication function and] whereby a non-reverting alkalophilic *Bacillus* strain having no detectable wild-type extracellular high alkaline protease is obtained.

13. (Twice Amended) The method according to Claim 12, wherein said alkalophilic *Bacillus* strain is *Bacillus* novo species PB92 or a derivative thereof [which is incapable of reversion and contains a mutant high alkaline protease].

14. (Twice Amended) An alkalophilic *Bacillus* strain producing a [mutant] mutated high alkaline protease [which is free of expression product of an] and no detectable [indigenous] wild-type extracellular alkaline protease [gene] endogenous to said alkalophilic *Bacillus* strain, wherein said strain [has been] is obtained by [transforming] growing an alkalophilic *Bacillus* strain [having no detectable indigenous extracellular high alkaline protease obtained by the method] according to Claim 12 or 13, [or 27 with] transformed with [a plasmid] an expression vector comprising [the] a [mutant] mutated high alkaline protease gene under conditions whereby said mutated high alkaline protease gene is expressed.

Cancel ~~Claim 15~~

19. (Reiterated) A detergent composition comprising as an active ingredient at least one mutant form of high alkaline protease prepared according to the method of Claim 23.

23. (Amended) A method for [production of] obtaining a mutated high alkaline protease free of [endogenous] wild-type extracellular high alkaline protease, said method comprising:

isolating said mutated high alkaline protease from growth medium or a cell lysate of [growing] a[n] non-reverting alkalophilic *Bacillus* strain host ~~[incapable of reversion and having]~~ which produces no detectable [endogenous] wild-type extracellular high alkaline protease endogenous to said alkalophilic *Bacillus* strain host [as a result of deletion of the gene for endogenous extracellular protease transformed with], wherein said alkalophilic *Bacillus* strain host contains at least one copy of an expression cassette [providing for expression of said] comprising a [mutant] mutated high alkaline protease gene [in said host,] and wherein said alkalophilic *Bacillus* strain host is grown under conditions whereby said [mutant] mutated high alkaline protease gene is [produced; and isolating said mutant high alkaline protease] expressed.

24. (Reiterated) A method for preparing a detergent composition, which comprises the step of combining a detergent composition with, as an active ingredient, at least one mutant form of a high alkaline protease prepared according to the method of Claim 23.

25. (Reiterated) A method for processing laundry, which comprises the step of contacting said laundry with a detergent composition comprising as an active ingredient at least one mutant form of a high alkaline protease prepared according to the method of Claim 23.

Cancel Claims 26-28.

29. (Twice Amended) A[n] non-reverting alkalophilic *Bacillus* strain [producing] which produces a [mutant] mutated high alkaline protease, wherein said strain [which is incapable of reversion and which is free of expression product of an endogenous] does not produce a wild type extracellular high alkaline protease [gene] endogenous to said alkalophilic *Bacillus* strain.

30. (Twice Amended) A method for [production of] obtaining a mutated [high alkaline] *Bacillus* novo species PB92 protease free of [endogenous] wild-type extracellular high alkaline protease, said method comprising:

isolating said [mutant high alkaline] mutated *Bacillus* novo species PB92 protease from [a culture broth] growth medium or cell lysate of a non-reverting alkalophilic *Bacillus* strain host [cells wherein said cells are substantially incapable of reversion and have] which produces no detectable [endogenous] wild-type extracellular high alkaline protease [as a result of deletion of the gene for] endogenous to said alkalophilic *Bacillus* strain [extracellular protease and wherein said cells produce a mutant high alkaline protease as a result of transformation of said cells or predecessor cells with] wherein said alkalophilic *Bacillus* strain host contains at least one copy of an expression cassette [providing for expression of said mutant high alkaline] comprising a mutated *Bacillus* novo species PB92 protease gene [in said host cells] and wherein said alkalophilic *Bacillus* strain host is grown under conditions whereby said mutated *Bacillus* novo species PB92 protease gene is expressed.

31. (Amended) The method according to Claim 30, wherein [untransformed parent cells of] said alkalophilic *Bacillus* strain host [cells are] is a *Bacillus novo* species PB92 strain [cells] or a derivative species thereof.

32. (Amended) The method according to Claim 30 or 31, wherein [untransformed parent cells of] said alkalophilic *Bacillus* strain host [cells are] is asporogenic.

33. (Amended) The method according to Claim 30 wherein said non-reverting alkalophilic *Bacillus* strain host [cells are] is free of [untransformed parent] cells which express a wild type high alkaline protease gene endogenous to said alkalophilic *Bacillus* strain host.

34. (Amended) An alkalophilic *Bacillus* strain comprising a non-reverting wild-type extracellular high alkaline protease-negative phenotype, wherein said strain or an ancestor of said strain was stably transformed with an [exogenous protease gene encoding a mutant] expression cassette comprising a high alkaline protease gene and wherein said strain has an increased efficiency in production of said mutant high alkaline protease as compared to an untransformed alkalophilic *Bacillus* strain of the same species.

35. (Amended) The alkalophilic *Bacillus* strain according to Claim 34, wherein said phenotype is [the] obtained as a result of a deletion of a sufficient amount of [an endogenous] a wild-type extracellular protease gene endogenous to said alkalophilic *Bacillus* strain so as to prevent reversion of said [non-reverting extracellular protease-negative] phenotype to a wild-type extracellular high alkaline protease-positive phenotype.

Cancel Claims 36-37.

Add the following new claims.

--38. (New) In detergent composition which has as an active ingredient at least one mutated high alkaline protease, the improvement which comprises no detectable wild-type high alkaline protease with said mutated high alkaline protease.